

TO THE MAYOR, ALDERMEN AND MEMBERS

OF THE

REDCAR BOROUGH COUNCIL.

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Mr. Mayor, Madam and Gentlemen,

I beg to submit my Annual Report for the year 1941 which, in accordance with the instructions of the Minister of Health, is again confined to essential and urgent matters affecting the public health.

The population is estimated to be very slightly less than in 1939, up to which year there had been a steady annual increase. The number of births did not reach the figure for 1938 but was a little more than the average of the last five pre-war years. The death-rate is very distinctly up, by nearly five per thousand of population over the average rate 1934-1938. Partly this will be due to the withdrawal of a number of young adults from the town while leaving all the more aged sections of the usual inhabitants. The infant mortality rate shows no increase and has been steady around a fairly satisfactory figure for the last ten years.

The only acute notifiable disease to be at all prevalent was measles, with 221 cases; diphtheria was the next most prevalent infection, with 51 cases notified, the highest in any year since 1934. There was only one case of enteric fever (paratyphoid B fever) and four cases of cerebro-spinal meningitis.

A slight increase occurred in the number of new cases of tuberculosis, and deaths also from this disease were above the recent average. This is of more importance as reflecting, in a small way, the experience of the whole country, and therefore probably cannot be put down to an artificial fluctuation from the small numbers involved, but depends on the operation of powerful factors associated with the war and hence likely to continue for the present and even increase. Of these factors possibly the most important is the strain, especially mental, affecting nearly everyone under the conditions of war. As this will not be lessened until victory, it behoves public health authorities meanwhile to scrutinise carefully their operations designed for the prevention of this disease and to obtain improvement if possible. Broadly, prevention rests on two groups of measures: those maintaining or raising the general health of the people, by good nutrition with fresh foods, good housing, and so on; and those aiming at the prevention of the infection of new cases by the earliest possible diagnosis of the disease and the removal of the infectious consumptive from close contact with non-infected persons (especially children) until he is no longer a source of danger. Tuberculosis is spread undoubtedly to a certain extent by milk from diseased cows, but the main fact is that the paramount source of infection is the consumptive. Unfortunately, perhaps, while the infection of diphtheria, measles, etc., takes but a few days to develop and show itself, so that the connection of one case with an earlier one is often very clear, the infection of tuberculosis usually takes many years to become evident, and so one is inclined to forget even that it is an infectious disease, in which, as in the others, measures of isolation are of importance. In the Combined Districts, in the year 1941, deaths from all the acuter infectious diseases together, such as diphtheria, measles, cerebro-spinal fever, and so on (but not including pneumonia as an infectious disease) totalled, in all, 21; deaths from tuberculosis numbered 35. Of these thirty-five deaths twenty-eight were due to tuberculosis of the lungs, and these patients had, without doubt, been infectious for months or years before their death. Among these twenty-eight cases twenty-three spent at least their last months, when the infection was likely to be at its height, and died, in their own homes. One cannot avoid the conclusion that a tragic crop of future cases has been silently sown, and will inexorably be harvested in years to come.

Children Immunised Against Diphtheria.

	Guisborough U.D.	Loftus U.D.	Redcar Borough	Saltburn and Marske U.D.	Skelton and Brotton U.D.
Number immunised					
at end of 1940 ...	436	342	1287	624	462
during 1941 ...	301	151	948	497	957
to 30/6/1942 ...	119	411	208	293	34
Total immunised 1935—30/6/1942 ...	856	904	2443	1414	1453
Estimated total number of children under 15 years old ...	1807	1860	5350	1283	3199
Percentage of children immunised	47½%	48½%	45½%	100%	45½%

In the Combined Districts there were in 1941 sixty-three cases of diphtheria notified in children under 15 years of age: fifty-five (with five deaths) in children who had not been immunised, and eight (with no deaths) in children who had received immunising injections. The insurance afforded by immunisation cannot now be doubted; the safety is evidenced by the fact that out of many thousand immunised in the combined districts no case of any trouble, beyond an occasional very temporary redness of the arm, has been reported.

There is reason to believe that not much effect on the general prevalence of diphtheria can be expected until the proportion of children protected by immunisation reaches or surpasses 80%.

The number of cases of scarlet fever in the borough was again low, for the third year in succession, in spite of the fact that almost one-half of the patients were isolated at home. This comparative absence of scarlet fever has been shared with the others of the combined districts, although not found in the statistics of the country as a whole. The total cases in the combined districts in the three years 1939 to 1941 were only 183, while in the single year 1938 there were 195 cases, and in 1937, 319, a figure which previously had several times been exceeded. If, and when, the disease does become epidemic locally again, it will find a larger proportion of children unprotected by a previous attack, and it is to be hoped that it will maintain the mild type that has characterised it of recent years in increasing degree.

I am, Madam and Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

Guisborough,

21st August, 1942.

C. R. GIBSON,

Medical Officer of Health.

Vital Statistics for 1941.

Population, estimated for mid-1941 by Registrar-General: 23,750.

Number of births 382; birth-rate 16.1.

(Average 1934—38, 348; birth-rate 15.5).

Number of deaths of residents, 398; death-rate, 16.8.

(Average 1934—38, 270; death-rate 12.0).

Infant Mortality Rate: 51 infant deaths per thousand births.

(Average 1934—38, 54½).

Notifications received: Scarlet fever 38; diphtheria 51; enteric fever 1; cerebro-spinal fever 4; encephalitis lethargica 1; puerperal pyrexia 1; erysipelas 4; pneumonia 24; measles 221; whooping cough 31.

Tuberculosis (new cases): 21 pulmonary; 5 non-pulmonary.